

Tale *Feathers*

April
2007

Volume 74
Number 3

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Come and enjoy two days of fun and learning at the Wings of Spring Birding Festival.

It will be held at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary on Saturday, May 5 and Sunday, May 6 and is open to the public. Admission to the festival is free. There will be demonstrations, speakers, live music, crafts, education and much more for all who come.

Join the St. Louis Audubon Society on these two days and learn what birds use what tools to eat. Also, watch a video on birds found in the St. Louis area. We will have tables in both the Education tent and the Exhibitors tent.

For more information go to the website at www.wingsofspring.org.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities

and

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Mission Statement
of
The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Help our community
sustain biological
Diversity through
Nature.

Goals
To foster an
awareness and
understanding
of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our
community so
people can make
informed decisions
about the natural
world.

B.K.Leach Rail Survey John Solodar

Many of you have participated in the B.K.Leach Rail Survey the last two years. Brian Loges, the manager of B.K.Leach for MDC has announced the dates for this year's survey. Please reserve as many of these evenings as you can to help with this valuable work. The dates are all Saturdays: June 2, 16, and 30. The surveys are conducted in the evening from about 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Details for signing up will be announced in the May Talefeathers although this author will take reservations before the next publication *Tale Feathers*.

Volunteers Needed!

If you enjoy working with children and adults and talking about nature, why not join the Education Committee. We are looking for new people to work with us and give presentations on all kinds of subjects.

We talk with school children, civic groups, scouts, libraries, churches, garden clubs and anyone else interested in nature. We just completed a full day of activities for some Junior Girl Scouts to allow them to earn their Wildlife Badge. We do not require you to have any special knowledge—we will train you and give you outlines for our programs.

Our new people do not give programs until they are comfortable with a topic.

We have no special days or hours—we usually do week-days, but occasionally we work on a week-end and sometimes in the evening. A lot of our programs are presented by two of our committee and, on occasion, the entire committee attends if there are a large number of people in attendance. Just give me a call at 636-391-8751 so we can discuss what we do to see if you might be interested in joining us.

Sharon Nickl
VP/Director of Education

Wednesday Birding Trips John Solodar

Our experimental Wednesday birding trips have proven to be quite popular and we have plans to expand them to once per month next season.

Meanwhile, the last two mid-week trips for this season are coming up in May.

The dates are May 2 in Tower Grove Park and May 16 at Shaw Nature Reserve. Pat Lueders will lead both trips and they both start at 7:30 AM.

Everyone is welcome whether members of SLAS or not and there is no charge. See the full article in this issue about the April & May trip for details and directions.

Birding Trips: April & May

John Solodar

The big spring migration starts up in earnest in April and continues through late May. Put aside those home repair chores, grab your binoculars and join the Audubon Society birding trips. We have an excellent selection for you.

April 7, Saturday – Busch Conservation

Area/Weldon Springs – Early migrants will be our targets at Busch, the Katy Trail access and possibly the so-called Blue Grosbeak Trail. John Solodar will lead this trip which will start at 8:00 AM. Although this trip is billed as ½ day, there is a good chance that it will go longer as we have a lot of territory to cover. Therefore, if you plan to go with us for the entire trip you should bring water and a lunch.

April 14, Saturday – Castlewood State Park – This is the first of our long string of spring trips aimed at the large group of migrant warblers, thrushes, tanagers, icterids, etc., which come through over the next few weeks. Castlewood always gives us lots of good birds so join Mike Brady and John Solodar on this half day walk at 8:00 AM.

April 20-22, All Weekend – Southeast Missouri Bootheel – This will be an out of town trip to the Bootheel area. Joe Eades and Jim Malone will be the birding leaders and Debbie Trowbridge is organizing the logistics. See the accompanying article in the April issue of Talefeathers.

April 28, Saturday – Shaw Nature

Reserve/Robertsville State Park – Join Connie Alwood for this trip to one of the better birding areas within the St. Louis region. This trip will start at 7:30 AM as we are almost at the peak of warbler migration and want to utilize as much of the morning daylight as possible. The place will be full of spring migrants and Connie is good at finding them. This trip does require a fair bit of walking as we will head out to the trail house (¾ mile from parking area) and cover some trails from there as well. Lunch will probably be Shaw and then the group will go to Robertsville State Park to look for some Henslow's Sparrows among other birds.

May 2, Wednesday – Tower Grove Park – This trip to Tower Grove Park comes just before the historic peak of migration. Tower Grove has been one of the premier birding spots for many years. Pat Lueders will lead this trip starting at 7:30 AM from the Gaddy Bird Garden.

May 5, Saturday – Tower Grove Park – See above. We'll try to get another leader to help Pat Lueders with this trip as there is often a good turnout of birders.

May 6, Sunday – Chubb Trail from Lone Elk Park – Mike Brady has been finding lots of interesting birds on this trail over the last few years. A highlight is a number of Henslow's Sparrows, but lots of warblers, etc. have been seen as well. Mike will lead this trip for us starting at 7:30 AM. Be forewarned, however, that this is a 4 mile hike round trip, the sun can be harsh in the open field area and that there is a tough 3/8 mile uphill climb at the end. Bring water for certain.

May 12, Saturday – Forest Park – This St. Louis City Park is the other perennially good birding park in the city. We'll start at 7:30 AM at the Kennedy Forest Trailhead off Wells Drive. The leader is not yet set, so check the next newsletter to see who it is.

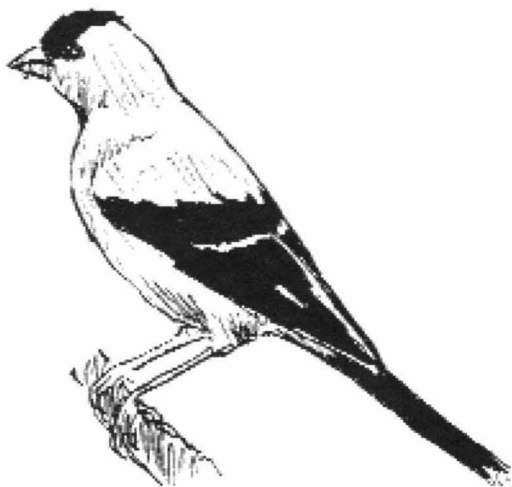
May 16, Wednesday – Shaw Nature Reserve/Robertsville State Park – This is billed as an all day trip starting at Shaw Nature Reserve and going on to Robertsville State Park. However, if you want to leave after the first half that's fine. It starts at 7:30 AM as we are within the peak of warbler migration and want to utilize as much of the morning daylight as possible. Shaw is a great place for birding with a variety of habitats (Prairie Warblers are almost guaranteed) and nearby Robertsville is attractive for Henslow's sparrows in some areas. Pat Lueders will lead this trip. Bring lunch and water.

(continued on page 7)

Scouts Earn Badge with SLAS Assist

Seven members of the SLAS Education Committee presented a full day of various topics to 18 Junior Girl Scouts at this year's Junior Girl Scout Badge Day. This is an annual event held in February at Lindbergh High School. The Scouts are offered a variety of badge programs to choose from and they earn their badge by participating in one of the programs for the day. The Education Committee presented seven different topics to meet the requirements of the Girl Scout Manual for the girls to earn their Wildlife Badge. A badge was awarded each girl at the close of our presentations that day. The topics included making a wildlife journal, bird identification and use of binoculars, knowing about symbols—State symbols are emphasized, bird adaptations, sketching wildlife and plants, endangered species, and a family of living things—the mammal group. The girls ended the day by learning about reptiles with the St. Louis Herpetological Society, who brought in a few live animals for the girls to see and touch including lizards and non-poisonous snakes.

If you know of a Scout Troop who might be interested in having us do this program for them, please have them contact Sharon Nickl (636-391-8751) or Pat McCormick (636-225-0264).



NATURAL HISTORY IN THE COLORADO ROCKIES

RICHARD W. COLES

To members of St. Louis Audubon and other nature folks, we take pleasure in offering a week's immersion in the Rockies of the Pike's Peak region, June 16-22.

Our group (20 or less) will enjoy intimate contact with the fauna and flora with professional interpreters of nature's splendor. These experts will lead us on hikes and van excursions as we explore desert canyons, ponderosa pine forests, sub-alpine spruce-fir forests and alpine tundra. We'll amble by streams and across meadows as we find and interpret wild flowers, birds, insects, mammals, rocks, fossils, and other features of diverse natural communities. Astronomy (weather permitting), geology, mining history, western water issues, a trail ride (optional, additional cost), perhaps a melodrama (optional, additional cost) with a visit to Cripple Creek, early hikes, and evening presentations complete our immersion in Colorado's grandeur. Our trip is late spring when a lot is happening in the natural communities we will visit.

We will be based at the Nature Place (TNP), a comfortable conference center surrounded by 18,000 acres, owned /leased by Sanborn Western Camps. We will be at 8,700 feet (quite comfortable in June) and will travel to 12,000 feet. Excellent food is served as buffet; most days we will assemble our won packed lunch for leisurely consumption in a place of beauty.

For pricing and more information, please contact Richard W. Coles, 220 Hickory Lane, Eureka, MO 63025. Phone: 636-938-5271 (home), 314-660-1820 (cell) or 314-935-8430.

THE GREAT SCHOOLYARD BIRD COUNT

The St. Louis Audubon Society's Education Committee wishes to thank "eight" teachers who gave their students The Great Backyard Bird Count experience on their school grounds February 16, 2007. The committee offered to deliver, as needed, 25 lbs. of bird seed, a bird feeder, a bird identification poster and a mounting pole to each classroom interested in submitting their census data via the internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Utica, NY.

This was the Labs 10th year of gathering bird census data continent-wide for four days in mid- February.

Each teacher was encouraged to offer seed many weeks in advance of the official census and to practice bird identification with their students. The students would then be prepared for the big day of the official count.

Participating Teachers :

Nicki Davenport, 3-4th grade classrooms at Jackson Park Elem. in U. City Schools.

Donna Kehres, 2-5th grade classrooms at Hudson Elem. in Webster Groves Schools.

Jean Siesener, science class at Ladue Middle School in Ladue Public Schools.

Angie Jungbluth, 6th grade science class at DuBray Middle School in Ft. Zumwalt Schools in St. Charles County.

Sandy Maloy, 4th grade at Edgar Road Elem. School in Webster Groves Schools.

Lyn Karrer and Mrs. Anjana Choudhuri, Des Peres Montessori School.

Becky Bopp, 2nd grade at McGrath Elem. School in Brentwood Schools.

The Committee hopes to enlist more interested teachers next year. If you know of any teacher who might want to participate, please contact Pat McCormick at 636-225-0264.

Join the students by counting the birds in your backyard for the census in February 2008.

Pat McCormick
SLAS Educ. Committee

Birding for Beginners

St. Louis Audubon Society Board Members, Lynne Breakstone and Jim Wilson, will lead a two hour workshop to introduce beginners to bird watching. This class is being in Forest Park at the Dennis and Judith Jones Education and Visitor Center and there is no fee to participate. The workshop will take place indoors with a short bird walk outside, weather permitting. We will start with a bird walk, leaving the Visitor Center at 8:30. Then we will finish with an indoor discussion ending at 10:30. Please come dressed for one-hour of birding with only moderate walking.

Topics will include:

How to begin to identify birds and learn more about them, paying attention to important field marks, what aspects of bird behavior help in identification, when to expect to see which birds in our area.

How to use field guides and which guides are useful,

How to use and choose binoculars (you can bring yours along),

Helpful hints for enjoying birds in the park or in your own backyard.

Saturday, April 7, 2007

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

**Dennis & Judith Jones Visitor and
Education Center
5595 Grand Drive in Forest Park
Learning Lab Classroom**

Kindly RSVP to Anne Grossmann at (314) 367-7275, Ext. 14 or email to agrossmann@forestparkforever.org. Class will be limited to 25 people

Lynne Breakstone is a Professor of French at Washington University and Jim Wilson is the E. Desmond Lee Foundation Endowed Professor of Experiential & Family Education at the University of Missouri St. Louis & Forest Park Forever.

President's Report Torrey Berger

Sometimes it feels like all the news, all of the time, is negative. On the environmental front, we are always hearing bad news about our streams and wild areas. There is always someone wanting to build a new levy, replace a wetland with a shopping mall and endless parking lots, or further channelize our major rivers.

Well, how about some good news for a change? How about some real progress for wetlands and wildlife right here at home on our own Mississippi River and Confluence flood plain. Following is a summary of four projects which are underway and which are providing, or will provide, wetland habitat for birds and other wildlife (and, incidentally provide great birding:

1. B.K. Leach Wildlife Area. Located off Highway 79 in Lincoln County (the latest favorite destination for our urban sprawl), the two tracks which compose this area have been greatly increased in size, and the Missouri department of Conservation ("MDC"), along with Ducks Unlimited and other parties, have created 1,700 acres of new wetlands, 620 acres of wet prairie and 350 acres of bottomland forest. SLAS has been involved in conducting breeding bird surveys with MDC for rail and bittern species in the new area and we are doing four planned species counts a year at this site. This area is fast becoming one of the best birding spots in our region with great varieties of ducks, wading birds, raptors, shorebirds and sparrows.

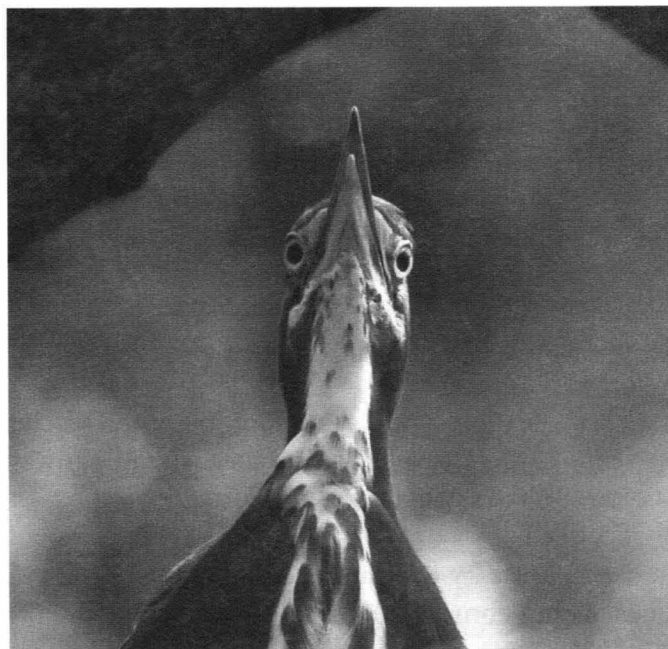
2. Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area. This is another MDC project located right at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Just this year MDC has completed construction and restoration of 950 acres of wetlands, 200 acres of wet prairie and 100 acres of bottomland forest. This area should prove to be a great stopover site for migrating water fowl and it has already started drawing a good variety of raptors, sparrows and other wetland species. MDC has indicated a commitment to manage the area for shorebird habitat as well as water fowl. SLAS has provided funding for a chimney swift tower at this site and it has become a regular destination for one of our field trips.

3. Edward "Ted" and Pat Jones Confluence Point State Park. This park is immediately across the Missouri River from Columbia Bottoms and is accessed through the U.S. Corps of Engineers' Riverlands Property. It consists of 1,118 acres of formerly crop lands now owned by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, State Parks Division ("DNR") plus an additional 532 which is leased from Great Rivers Greenway. DNR has prepared and started implementation of a Re-vegetation and Restoration Plan for the entire area, which will eventually remove all lands from agriculture and re-vegetate with a goal of recreating the landscape seen by Lewis and Clark. SLAS has partnered with DNR to provide "in kind" services for species survey and educational programs in the park so that DNR can use the value of such services as matching funds for federal grants to help fund the restorations. Here again, the birds have already started to notice the progress, with good numbers of migrants showing up and an active Bald Eagle nest almost at the confluence point.

4. Little Creve Coeur Lake. In connection with the Page Avenue extension, some 700 acres of previously privately owned land was added to Creve Coeur Park, including the marsh area known as Little Creve Coeur Lake, an old oxbow of the Mississippi River. St. Louis County Parks Department is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the Federal Government for the construction of 154 acres of wetlands to be added to the 120 acres constructed by County Parks and the 75 acres constructed by MODOT as mitigation wetlands. During wet periods these areas have been very attractive to shorebirds and waders, including Least Bittern, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen and nesting Pied Billed Grebe and possibly Ruddy Duck. Harris, LeCont's and Sharptail Sparrows have been seen there, as well as almost all the raptor species possible in eastern Missouri. The area suffers in periods of draught and methods to manage water levels are presently under study. SLAS has been involved with County Parks and other conservation NGOs in the planning for this area, and it is anticipated that we will continue to make contributions toward its development in the future.

When all four of these projects are completed, there will be over 6,000 acres of new and improved habitat for the birds and other wildlife that live and travel through the wetland along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their confluence area. That ain't all bad!

Torrey



Least Bittern
Picture submitted by Mike Thelen

(continued from page 3)

How to get there:

Busch Conservation Area - Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to the traffic light at Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot.

Castlewood State Park - Take Big Bend west from I-270 for about 6 miles. Turn left on Ries Road. Follow Ries to its termination, and then turn left into the Park. Park in the lot on the right just before the first small stream.

Chubb Trail from Lone Elk Park - From I-44 take the Hwy 141 North exit then the first right to get to the north outer road. Go west on the north outer road following the signs to Lone Elk Park. After a bit of driving on the Lone Elk Park road park on the shoulder just past the gate to the World Bird Sanctuary.

Forest Park - Take Hampton Ave north from I-64 (Hwy 40 to locals) in St. Louis City. To access the Kennedy Forest Trailhead turn left onto Wells Drive at the first traffic light after Hampton crosses over I-64/Hwy 40. Follow Wells past the Zoo and look for the MDC trailhead signs on the right. Park in the inner area of the circle. Alternatively, take Wells Drive from Skinker, stay to the right until you see the MDC trailhead sign on the left.

Shaw Nature Reserve - I-44 west from I-270 to Gray Summit (Hwy 100). Cross over I-44 on Hwy 100. Follow Hwy 100 one block right to the entrance. (Entrance fee \$3.00 per person.)

Tower Grove Park (Gaddy Bird Garden) - I-44 or I-64 (Highway 40) to south Kingshighway. From I-64 go about 1 mile to left on Magnolia. Park on street; walk to the brushy area (Gaddy Bird Garden) at the northwest corner of the park. We'll meet at the Yellow Gaddy Bird Garden sign.

Beginners Birding Trips

St. Louis Audubon Society initiated a new program this year aimed at people who are absolute beginners in birding. In general, our regular bird walks are designed to accommodate beginners, but our recent member survey revealed that some beginners feel uncomfortable being in a larger group with experienced birders.

To help these people we are conducting a series of three birding trips just for them. The last of these is on May 12 at Forest Park. The leader will be an experienced birder from our regular corps of leader volunteers. Although there is also a regular birding trip scheduled at the same time, rest assured that the beginners will be split away from that group and will bird as a separate group. The starting time is 7:30 AM. For directions consult the main birding article in this issue.

Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2006 - 2007

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St. Louis Audubon Society Chapter Only Membership Application

Note: To receive the National Audubon Magazine, contact the National Audubon Society for an additional application.

Your membership dues will go directly to the St. Louis Audubon Society. Your membership dues support local issues that are important to you, programs at our general meetings, and *Tale Feathers*, our newsletter.

For questions about membership, contact Cathy Devine or Anne Rankin Horton or Mary Dueren (contact information listed on inside back page)

Chapter Only Dues are \$15.00 per year and cover all members living at the same address.

Please complete the form, enclose a check payable to SLAS, and mail to:

St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 220227, Kirkwood, Mo. 63122.

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